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What Do We Mean By 'Sin'?

BY CHARLES EUGENE CONOVER

OUR age is rediscovering the reality of sin in human life. We seldom call it by that name. But we are increasingly aware that it is more difficult to build a world of peace and justice than we had understood. The writer of a book on *The Next Hundred Years* as scientists see them looks at the perplexing contrast in America between what we are equipped to produce in our factories and on our farms, and our widespread poverty. Something keeps us back from our goal of abundance for all. We are, says this writer, like a bird beating its head against an invisible glass barrier which keeps it from its destination.

This is the tragedy of the modern world: We want to fulfill our dream of justice and plenty for all, but poverty and injustice continue. The peoples of the world want peace, but they are drawn into war. How aptly the words of St. Paul, changed into the plural, describe our situation: "For the good which we would we do not: but the evil which we would not, that we practice." Trace the roots of our human frustration in our inherited society and in human nature; then you will understand what Christians have meant in speaking of the reality of sin in human life!

This morning I want to speak to those of you who recognize the tragedy of the modern world, and who want to make some contribution in this generation to the building of a better world. And the place to begin is with ourselves, for you and I are products of the world we want to save. Before we are ready to deal with the sins of the world, we must deal with the world's sin in us. And it is when we ask what the meaning of sin is in our own lives that we are most puzzled today. We are rather well aware of the sins of Germany and Japan and Russia; but we do not often call ourselves sinners.

One of our difficulties is that we have inherited an

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inadequate list of sins. The church of a generation ago made its chief attack upon dancing, card-playing, theater-going and drinking. One thing to be said about that list is that it presupposed a high standard of morality in other realms of life. There, Christians felt, were definite points at which people were tempted to a lower standard of morality.

But we live in very changed circumstances. For many of us, the idea of sin itself has gone with the idea that dancing is a sin. And we do not have, for our own day, a clearly defined list of the points at which we are tempted to lower our moral standards. We are not even sure what moral standards to adopt in many areas of life! And we are puzzled both as to what the meaning of sin is, and what things are sinful. An inherited list of sins will not meet our needs. We need to go deeper—to ask how one can discover what really is sinful.

One way to get at our real sins is to ask this question: What are the marks of sin? What are the evidences that a thing is sinful? Susanna Wesley, the mother of John and Charles Wesley, once gave this discerning answer: "Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things, that is sin to you."

I

"Whatever weakens your reason."

A few years ago Hendrik Willem Van Loon wrote this warning: "Today, in the midst of the greatest revolution the world has ever seen, there is only one unpardonable sin—indifference. And there is another sin, almost as unpardonable as the first, and that is ignorance. Before the throne of coming events, it will avail you nothing to explain, 'Well, I did not understand,' or 'So many things have happened, I just couldn't keep interested.' For you shall go into the limbo of those who did not deserve to survive—who had ears to hear, yet heard not, and eyes to see, yet saw not."

Van Loon is right: whatever weakens our rational grasp of the crisis through which we are passing is sin. We cannot even understand the complex events of our day without serious intellectual effort; only those who know can build for the future.

What weakens our reason today? For many persons, the answer would be: comfortable and easy substitutes for thinking. It is so much easier to settle down with our present ideas and prejudices than it is to think. The modern substitutes for thinking seem harmless enough: movies, radio programs, bridge, light reading. We fill our time with amusements which keep us from serious and intelligent conversation and reading. Whatever keeps us from using our minds constructively—that is sin to us!

But the answer, for students, is not so clearly evident. Georgia Harkness has pointed out that we all want knowledge. But many of us who seek a higher education are content with enough knowledge to "get by." Why do so many of us lack intellectual seriousness? Why are so many of us satisfied to learn many truths, without relating those truths in one consistent interpretation of the world?

The magazine *Fortune,* in its survey of students in 1936, explained the rapid increase in student enrollment in courses in social science as a search, not for knowledge by which to change the world, but for the knowledge which will enable the individual to find a safe job. Why are so many of us ready to use our minds only to gain some privileged place for ourselves? Whatever deprives us of our seriousness about life, whatever decreases our devotion to truth, weakens our reason. And "whatever weakens your reason—that is sin to you."

II

A second mark of sin, said Susanna Wesley, is found in its effect upon conscience. "Whatever impairs the tenderness of your conscience . . . is sin." The Christian religion has made its contributions to the development of the modern world through men and women of sensitive consciences and high courage. Walter Pater describes Marius the Epicurean, who had witnessed the old gladiatorial combats, as feeling that "what was needed was the heart that could make it impossible to witness all this, and the future would be with the forces which could beget this heart." Our religion produced that more sensitive conscience, and from it through the centuries there have come new insights—including our present-day awareness of the imminent evils of war and national hatreds and poverty.

But it is not an easy thing to develop, and maintain, a sensitive conscience. Our troubles come in part from our own desires. As the Epistle of James puts it, "Everyone is beguiled and allured by his own desire; then Desire conceives and breeds Sin." And sin impairs the tenderness of conscience.

Dean Wicks of Princeton University has written of the official account of the sinking of the Titanic. The captain of the ship, which was on her maiden voyage, was ambitious to set a record. He desired fame for himself and his company. Five times the radio brought warnings of ice ahead, but he kept the great ship on her way at twenty-two knots, in a fog. Only twelve miles away the steamship California was also in an ice field. And just five minutes before the Titanic crashed, the California's radio operator took off his head-phones and went to bed—because he was sleepy; yet he knew of the dangers of that foggy night, in the midst of icebergs. The California could have saved the lives of all of the passengers on the Titanic—if she had heard the S.O.S. call. The captain's desire for fame, and the radio operator's urgent desire for sleep, seemed innocent enough; but they impaired the sailor's high sense of responsibility for human lives.

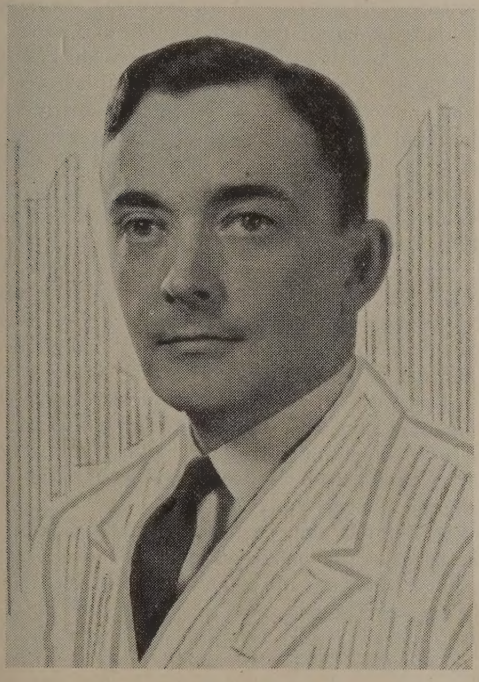
Let us face the fact that the sensitiveness of the Christian conscience can be maintained only with difficulty in such a time as this. Gregory Vlastos tells of a student at a Canadian university who participated in a rooming-house discussion of the problem of Jewish refugees. This was his solution: "Send them into the Sahara desert." A brutal world will brutalize us unless we resist its pressure. And there are national and business interests in this time of war against which we must be on our guard. After the bombardment of civilians in unfortified areas of Paraguay by Bolivia some

years ago, the head of an American airplane factory said: "I'm glad to see that the Bolivians are getting some good out of the planes they have bought."

Whatever the desires, or the social pressures, which will "impair the tenderness of conscience" may be, to sacrifice your conscience is sin.

III

A third mark of sin, according to Susanna Wesley, is that it "obscures your sense of God." It is one of the commonly recognized characteristics of our day that the sense of God has become dim. And it is one of our tasks, in understanding the world which we have



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inherited, to discover why God seems so remote from modern life. What is the sin of the modern world?

It is not the sin of irreligion. Malcolm Cowley, in a review of Aldous Huxley's latest novel, makes this revealing remark: "We are almost all of us religious these days, no matter what the faith to which we cling. Even the followers of the great man who said that religion is the opium of the people have created an institutionalized religion of their own, which in turn may become the opium of a people. Fascism, too is a religion; so are science, humanity, the nation and business enterprise." To Cowley's list we might well add that very simple current campus religion: "Don't let anything interfere with having fun."

We are in the situation of being religious, without having a deep sense of the reality of God. God is obscured by lesser gods—the proletarian class, the German Volk, the nation, fun. This is precisely what the Bible means by idolatry. It is giving to lesser things the devotion which belongs only to God. The problem of getting people to give their supreme loyalty to that which is of supreme importance is far more difficult than we have understood. We give ourselves to good things. But if we allow these good things to obscure our sense of God, that is sinful. The sin of the modern world is that of giving supreme devotion to things which are not of supreme importance. "Where a man's treasure is there is his heart also," said Jesus. And if his treasure is not worthy of his highest devotion, frustration awaits him.

What does it mean to have a sense of God? It means giving the Supreme Reality its rightful place in our lives. It means an inclusive devotion which lifts us out of our self-centeredness to include all mankind, and the Kingdom of God. To love God is to put first the Supreme Reality and the Supreme Goodness. And it cannot be said that the modern world is doing that.

Fortune not long ago published an editorial entitled "The Failure of the Church." I commend it to you. "By no conceivable set of circumstances," the editors say, "will it be possible to solve by materialism the titanic problems, domestic and international, with which humanity is faced today." We are in a vicious descending spiral of spiritual disillusionment. "There is only one way out of the spiral. The way out is the sound of a voice, not our voice, but a voice coming from something not ourselves, in which we cannot disbelieve." What the editors of *Fortune* ask for is a rediscovery of the reality of God, who is above our human groups and possessions. And whatever keeps you from that sense of God—no matter how good it may be in itself—that is sin to you!

IV

Finally, Susanna Wesley suggested, sin may be recognized because it "takes off the relish of spiritual things." St. Paul once gave a list of spiritual things: "Finally, brothers, keep in mind whatever is true, whatever is worthy, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is attractive, whatever is high-toned, all excellence, all merit."

Why do we find that advice so difficult to follow? I suggest, first of all, that it sounds "tame." It isn't exciting enough. We live under continual strain and excitement. We demand spectacular things. We wait to have our attention captured. And the things of the spirit—truth, beauty and goodness—demand discipline, and effort, and quiet.

Yet it may be that the trouble lies with us rather than with spiritual things. Continual excitement leaves us worn, jaded, indifferent. Our spiral of disillusionment is in part due to our lack of inner peace and satisfaction. "Not one person in ten gives the impression of inner peace and serenity," says a psychologist. And one requirement for those who would find life that is rich and deeply satisfying is that they seek diligently to avoid those things which "take off the relish of spiritual things."

But the second great sin of today which keeps us from the enjoyment of spiritual things is our absorption in material things.

John Bunyan found one of the dangerous points on

Pilgrim's road at a town called Vanity Fair—which is the realm of material possessions and worldly honors. Vanity Fair in our day has become far more extensive; its 1939 version was called *The World of Tomorrow.* It is a fascinating place—and it promises much for the welfare of mankind—if we use its wares rightly. But we must learn what we can expect from Vanity Fair. There are many who say that we can expect the satisfactions which our fathers found in religion in the things "which are seen and temporal."

A few years ago a colorful advertisement appeared on billboards, car cards and magazine pages. It read:

I am your Best Friend
In anxiety—Relief
In distress—Courage
In achievement—Content
In loneliness—Companionship
I am your. . . .

The name was that of a popular brand of cigarettes. Those promises are promises of spiritual help; they are, in truth, the promises of religion. Beware of the promises of those who offer more than they can deliver!

We have expected from material things the satisfactions which are spiritual. The editors of *Fortune* are right. Our civilization was not created by materialism; it was built by men and women who believed in the reality and the supreme importance of spiritual things. And, in the words of this editorial, "by no conceivable set of circumstances will it be possible to solve by materialism the titanic problems . . . with which humanity is faced today." Unless we see Vanity Fair in its true light, and press on to concern ourselves with "whatever is true, whatever is just, whatever is worthy," the World of Tomorrow may be amazingly ingenious—but with all its material merits it will not be worth living in. "Whatever takes off the relish of spiritual things, that is sin to you."

We do not like to talk about sin. Our age has avoided the use of the word. But it has not escaped the realities of which Christians have spoken when they understood the word they used. What do we mean by *sin?* When it is genuine and true, the Christian sense of sin concerns itself with those things which keep us from the full development of our personalities, and from society of justice and peace. We sin when we do less than our best, when we "miss the mark," when we consciously choose the lower, rather than the higher, way.

But I have maintained this morning that sin goes deeper than that. You and I are the products of a world which is now in a grave crisis. Our society has "missed the mark." And before you and I can build a better world, we must recognize, and turn from, the world's sin in us. The only honest and hopeful approach is to ask why we are in this critical situation. If it is because we are sinners, then let's acknowledge our sins, and turn from them! And as a basis for a searching consideration of our own lives, I again suggest the wise words of Susanna Wesley: "Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things, that is sin to you."

'All This, and Heaven Too'

By Edgar DeWitt Jones

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Hebrews 11:13.

"ALL This, and Heaven Too" is the delectable title of a recent novel of distinction. It tells the story of a young Frenchwoman of fine personality and great competence. Obliged to work for her living, she became a governess in one of the first families of France. It was a large household, for the duke and duchess had nine children. There was an estrangement between the husband and wife, and the governess, who dearly loved children and was adept at managing them, became an object of the Duchess' jealousy. In the end the duchess was mysteriously murdered. The duke and the governess, though innocent, were under suspicion and were tried in the courts but freed.

It was an experience harrowing in the extreme, and the governess' name was dragged through the mire. Later she came to America to teach in a girls' school and to try to forget all her troubles. A young American minister fell in love with her. They were married and led an ideal life together. After the storm came sunshine and blue sky. I might add that the story is based on truth and deals with a famous American family. It is a delightful book to read, and the ending is like the end of a perfect day.

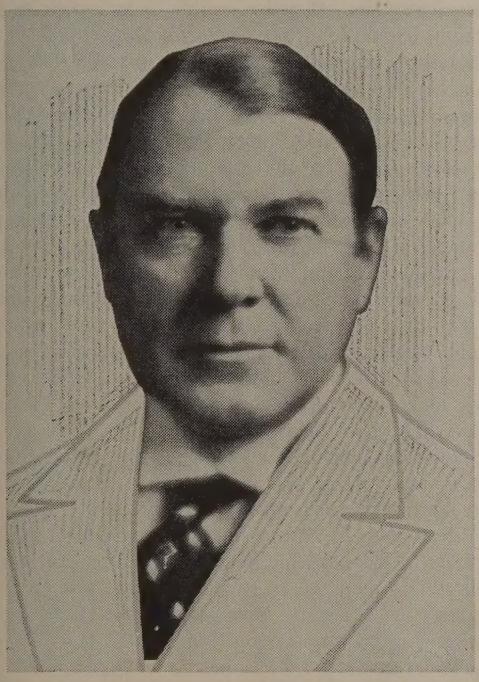
Life is like this sometimes, but certainly not always. Bitter adversity is not always followed by the sweets of ineffable happiness, and many wait for Prince Charmings who never come. And sometimes "all this" so wears and breaks human beings that when the "heaven, too" experience comes, they are ill fitted to enjoy it. Yet when I say this I am taking a surface view and have not considered the possibilities of the life of the Spirit and the way of faith. Given these, one can truthfully say, "All this, and heaven too."

The saddest shrine in all America is the battlefield of Gettysburg. To wander over that wide expanse where Pickett's men marched to glory, or to climb the storied hilltops where thousands died in a shambles, is to company with phantom heroes while the voice of memory whispers low, "If you have tears, prepare to shed them now." The blood of contending armies, both American, hallows the ground where brave men gave their last full measure of devotion. As in a dream the visitor sees a tall, gaunt, lonely figure standing before a multitude, speaking in simple and beautiful words a tribute to those who struggled there; and mingling with those noble phrases in muffled antiphonal, he hears the words of another famed American: "Liberty and union, now and forever, one and inseparable."

Gettysburg is a shrine of both victory and defeat. Life is like that. Victory and defeat commingle. Life is never all defeat nor all victory, though at times it may

seem to be one or the other. Moreover, there is so much defeat in victory that it does not become any of us to be unduly elated over success, and there is so much victory in defeat that there is no reason to be cast down by failure. I speak a paradox, but life itself is paradoxical. All this, and heaven too!

Some years ago, in Detroit, I attended a dinner given in honor of one of the most famous athletes of all times, Tyrus Raymond Cobb, better known as "Ty." The dinner was held in the largest banquet room of a sumptuous hotel. Celebrities in the world of sport, finance, politics and the various professions were present. I was there to say grace, and it was my privilege to spend a quarter of an hour with Mr. Cobb while



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the guests were gathering. I complimented him on his unique career, congratulated him because of the place he had won in the affections of the people.

The famed Georgian was in a pensive mood. He dismissed my praise as scarcely deserved. "I have had a good time," he said, "and I have been well paid, but I wish I had been a doctor and had won distinction in that field. Then I could look back to years spent in helping people, setting broken bones and healing their hurts." And he was serious. He meant it, every word. Here was defeat in victory; something was missing; and as I looked at him, I thought of the famous couplet:

> Alas, of all sad words of tongue or pen
> The saddest are these, it might have been.

Nor is this an isolated case. It is one of many. Was it not Wellington, the Iron Duke, who, viewing Waterloo, remarked that the saddest thing next to a great defeat is a great victory?

I

If ever a human being was, by all human standards, terribly defeated, that person was Jesus of Nazareth. For thirty years his life was lived amid pastoral scenes, in the hill country of Galilee. Day followed day with little change. There was the glory of the sunrise, the charm of the dewy mountainside, the spectacle of flocks of sheep led by faithful shepherds. There were the long evenings with the shimmering stars overhead, and the story of the prophets, sages and poets of Israel, to which he listened entranced. There were the holy Sabbaths and the services at the synagogue, where he was accustomed to be. Thirty years of this, and then his private life came to an end. He entered upon his public mission and a year of popularity with crowds following him and listening spellbound to his every utterance. Little children clambered about his knees, and so great was his following that an observer remarked, "Behold the whole world is gone after him."

Then came the swift change. Jesus' popularity ebbed almost overnight. The opposition of the powerful in state and church turned upon him savagely. They misrepresented him, misconstrued his teachings. One of his own intimates bargained to deliver him into the hands of the enemy. His trial was a farce. The judge acquitted him; then, fearful of the political repercussion, delivered him to the mob who thirsted for his blood. And outside the city wall upon a cross, on either side a malefactor, he died. His followers scattered in despair. The bright dream ended. Such defeat there never was. It was overwhelming and devastating. Yet out of this colossal failure came such a victory as the world has never known before or since; a victory to which not even the strains of the Hallelujah Chorus can do justice. All this, and heaven too!

Or, take a page from our nation's history. The great American tragedy is the Civil War. It divided a nation, households, churches, and left a legacy of sorrow, suffering and rancor. Yet out of the struggle came victory and defeat curiously intermingled. At Appomattox, on April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee surrendered the army of the Confederacy to the victorious commander of the armies of the North, General Ulysses S. Grant. It was a scene that artists love to put on canvas and it has supplied the theme for many a novel, poem and oration. The men in blue with "flaunting flags and prancing nags" returned to their homes mighty conquerers, some to go into business and amass fortunes, some to enter politics, become governors and senators, and a few to achieve the presidency of the United States. No one could wish to detract from their fame. They were victors and entitled to praise and preferment.

From Appomattox went victorious General Grant into the presidency of the United States. The period following the war was marked by corruption in high places, but no scandal touched the President himself. Out of office, he became involved in a financial enterprise, was betrayed by an associate, lost all his holdings, and was burdened with a huge indebtedness. Though suffering with a fatal malady, he set himself heroically to the task of writing his memoirs. It was as if with

one hand he pushed back the grim specter of death and with the other completed the writings that were to lift the load of debt and free his family name from any breath of dishonor. As the long shadows deepened and he reflected upon the grim battlefields over which brave men, north and south, had struggled, he breathed a prayer which the world does well to heed at this hour, "Let us have peace."

Look on that picture and now on this. The men in uniform of gray went back to run-down farms, devastated regions, war-scourged cities, impoverished estates. Many of their homes were in ashes; they had to begin all over again. On an April day in 1865, through long lines of weeping men, there rode the commander-in-chief of the defeated army, grave of countenance but calm of spirit. All his material possessions were gone; beloved Arlington had passed out of his hands. There came an offer of a home in England, where he might spend the rest of his days in comfort, ease and luxury. He declined it. He refused the twenty-five thousand dollars a year offered him by an insurance company, saying, "I can receive no money that I have not earned," and became president of a small and struggling college, at a salary of fifteen hundred dollars. He nourished no rancor, showed no bitterness, called upon his former soldiers to support the Union. One day a mother put her little child in his arms and asked that he offer a prayer for her first-born. General Lee bowed his head over the child, and, handing him back to his mother, said, "Teach him to deny himself."

When men can meet defeat in such a spirit, victory is present. "He who ruleth his own spirit is greater than he who takes a city." All this, and heaven too!

II

We live in a world where, if we are to judge by external things, God is often defeated. As long as injustice reigns, God is defeated. Wherever individuals or institutions discriminate unjustly against race, class or creed, God is defeated. As long as one little child hungers in vain, God is defeated. As long as men are willing to work and can find no employment, God is defeated. As long as men fight to the death in the name of governments, parties, classes, God is defeated. As long as poisonous gases and deadly bombs are turned upon helpless women and children, God is defeated. Wars are man-made. Benjamin Franklin's affirmation that there never was a good war or a bad peace, like all general statements, admits of qualification, but there is far more truth in it than error.

Looking out over the world at this present hour, God seems defeated. Justice limps; good will is sick; truth is sorely wounded in the house of her friends. Dark days these. But the returns are not all in. You say yesterday little Czechoslovakia went down in tragic defeat. I wonder! You should listen to President Benes voicing his own faith that his country, now crushed to earth, will rise again, and speaking, too, without hate or rancor. This is of itself an instance of victory in defeat. The curtain fell upon the Czech democracy but it will rise again. All this, and heaven too!

Is there any section of the world where the clouds of defeat are thicker than they are in China? I am speaking now of the enemy's superior forces and highly trained troops, with the most modern engines of destruction. These are opposed to China, which seems hopelessly outclassed in a military way. Yet the spirit of China is vibrant with courage and her morale amazing. Recently, in one of the metropolitan newspapers of the middle west, a staff correspondent writing from China gave it as his conviction that the cause of Christian missions in that country is due for a renaissance. Only he put it more strongly, saying that every door that had been closed to the missionary enterprise in China was now wide open.

Newspapermen are not given to fulsome tributes to foreign missions. But this writer, a journalist of distinction, has nothing but praise for the attitude of the Christian missionaries who refused to leave their posts of danger, but chose instead to identify themselves with China and her cause. Thus again, out of the darkness that broods over the Chinese republic flashes this light of victory. Is there any situation, circumstance, condition, however dark and appalling, that does not supply examples of triumphant faith, courage, patience and sacrificial glory? All this, and heaven too!

Contemporary judgment on men and movements is seldom just. Sound judgment and fair appraisal come by way of a perspective. It takes "the sure years" to decide. Some think the past half-dozen years in our national life are milestones of failure and defeat, politically and economically; but the unbiased historian twenty-five years hence may show that these crucial years, with so much experimentation that brought hardship in high places and in low, were years in which were planted the seeds of victory.

A democracy is not one single experiment on a grand scale, but a series of experiments, some successful, others failures. No man can be sure of the outcome until the "heroes" and "villains" have passed from off the public stage and calm, disinterested judgment is possible. The tragedy of a democracy is not its inefficiency but the fact that dishonesty, chicanery and skulduggery are so often victorious. A democracy carries within itself the cure of its ills—investigation, "pitiless publicity" and an informed citizenship.

College men and women going out into the world carry a definite obligation to society. Have they not learned something from history? Should they not profit by the examples of ruthless leaders whose story stains the pages of the record? Shall not the blood of the martyrs be the seed of the republic, the school and the home as well as of the church? There is no finer epigram coined by an American than that of Wendell Phillips, the agitator, when he said: "If the Alps piled in cold and silence be the emblem of despotism, we joyfully take the ever restless ocean for ours—only pure because never still." Be not afraid of defeat in any righteous cause or deed; rather, fear the victory that comes too easily.

Woodrow Wilson said—and he spoke from a valley of defeat into which he fell from the shining heights of such fame as has come to few of the sons of men: "I would rather fail in a cause that I know some day

will triumph, than win in a cause that I know some day will fail." All this, and heaven too!

In his recent autobiography entitled *Fighting Years,* Oswald Garrison Villard says that to his mind the high-water mark of personal virtue and patriotic service in the White House in his lifetime was a certain scene there in 1888. Mr. Cleveland called in his chief political advisers to talk to them about the coming presidential campaign. He did not ask them what he should do so far as his own political fortunes were concerned. He told them what he expected to do. When they had assembled, he announced to them that he had determined to stand for reelection on the issue of a tariff for revenue only. Immediately every man in the room protested; told him that if he asked for reelection on that issue he would be defeated. "Very well, then, gentlemen," said Grover Cleveland, "I shall be defeated"—and he was.

When President Cleveland went out of office he confided to an intimate that he did not believe he had a friend in the nation. Before he died he was to see many evidences of respect and affection. Today he ranks in the small company of our greatest presidents. All this, and heaven too.

III

There are defeats and defeats. They vary in intensity, cause and effect. There are the defeats that we bring upon ourselves, sometimes deliberately. We trifle with honesty and pay the price. We flout those virtues that have been tested by the centuries and found valid. We throw ourselves against that rock known as the Ten Commandments. The result—we are broken. The only victory that can come out of this kind of defeat is by way of repentance.

When the prodigal son came to himself he said—well, what did he say? He might have said: "I am not to blame for this. There is no living at home with that brother of mine." But he didn't say that. He might have said: "It isn't my fault that I am here, penniless. I had an ancestor who was a gay dog. I am not to blame; charge it to hereditary influence." But he didn't say that. He might have said: "Oh well, this thing isn't so bad after all. I have had my little fling. It's part of my education." But he didn't say that. What he did say was: "I have sinned. I am no more worthy to be called the son of my father. I am going back home and ask his forgiveness." And he went. That is repentance.

Then there are the defeats that come to us as a result of the wrongdoing of others. Somebody fails us, betrays us. It may be a friend, a business associate, a relative. We suffer vicariously. Somebody pulls the house down upon us and leaves us to get out of the ruins as best we can. Sadly disillusioned, we grope our way to light. The victory out of such a defeat is the sheer grandeur of being able to say, as One said who hung upon a cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

There are other failures and defeats for which we cannot account. They come as from a cloudless sky. We gave our best, and failed. We went the second mile, but without results. Nobody, so far as we could see, contributed to our failure. Disappointment, adversity, affliction—all these were heaped upon us; nothing seemed to avail. God let us down. The victory in such a defeat is that of faith and faith alone, the steadfast belief that when the returns come in God will be heard; that despite everything, God is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him. That is the victory of victories in the defeat of defeats.

In the long struggle between right and wrong judgment must be suspended until all the returns are in; and until they are, we must walk by faith, not by sight. Nor should we overlook or fail to appraise the assurances of the final outcome when the long day is done. The Bible is still the book for such a time as this, and for all times. Turn to the eighth chapter of Romans and note the triumphant spirit in which it concludes:

> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I come back to the Scripture that stands at the beginning of this sermon. I have not so much as referred to it, but the truth of it permeates all I have said: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." The truth of this statement all humanity must know and experience. For, written into this fragment from the Epistle to the Hebrews, as everywhere else, is the watermark, "All this, and heaven too."

It is a great moment in any man's life when God becomes a living reality to him; when out of cloud or flame, in the silence of the night, or in the busy day, the living voice of the Eternal is heard. It may be called, in the truest sense, an awful, a sublime moment. It came to Abraham, to Jacob, to Elijah, who hid his face in his mantle, to Isaiah, to Paul, to Augustine, to Luther, and to the innumerable obscurer people who have enriched the history of humanity by noble lives and faithful service. I believe it comes sooner or later to every man who really cares for his fellows, and broods over the mysteries which surround and darken human existence, and looks up for light.

Charles Brown.

The modern discovery of the unvarying uniformity of natural law ought to make it much easier for us to believe in an equal dependability in God's moral character. A universe in which the stars move with clocklike accuracy and the operations of nature can be depended on everywhere and always, is an encouraging suggestion of that eternal faithfulness in which the psalmist put his trust. Rollin H. Walker.

God In The Commonplace

By James M. Lichliter

Jesus therefore said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders ye will in no wise believe. John 4:48.

THAT is usually the case. Almost as a matter of instinct, men think of God in terms of miracle. They catalogue him with the unfamiliar. They look for him in weird, sensational events; occult experiences; mysterious and awe-inspiring things. If God is supernatural, he must manifest himself in supernatural ways. That is the evidence we want in order to believe—signs and wonders.

But Jesus thought differently. Only an evil and adulterous generation, he said, demands such proof. The men of Nineveh were won to repentance, not by the miracles of Jonah—for he wrought none—but by his preaching. The Queen of Sheba was converted by Solomon because he was very wise—not because he did anything unusual. If men would not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. So Jesus argued. And this explains why he was so careful in using his psychiatric powers, why he always enjoined silence on those he cured, and avoided the magician's notoriety. Religion, in his mind, was not a thing of signs and wonders. He repudiated the idea. And for several good reasons, I think.

WHERE SIGNS AND WONDERS FAIL

First of all, there is a world of difference between an intelligent faith intelligently held and a gaping credulity. The one is vastly superior to the other. To believe in God because our minds have been outraged and every sensible notion of human reasoning infringed upon is certainly an affront to nature. It puts religion on a par with Mumbo-Jumbo and the witch-doctors. But more than this—it robs the soul. The glory of man is his capacity to live intelligently. His greatest welfare lies in the development of mind, in a progressive achievement of rationality. If that is not so, then education is a waste of time, and Socrates is no higher in the scale than the Java man. Anything, therefore, which short-circuits thinking, renders it unnecessary, does more harm than good. Authority and miracle stultify the soul. So Jesus, who knew what he was doing, would have none of it. He was tempted in the wilderness to force men's faith, to overawe and cow them by sensational feats. But he wouldn't. What he wanted was the loyalty of sane minds intelligently convinced, not the credulity of fools who believed only because they were nonplussed.

Then, in the second place, signs and wonders do not prove anything. Certain Oriental astronomers believe that an eclipse is caused by a dragon swallowing the sun. Would that be right—supposing they had magic powers to resurrect the dead? Aristotle said that heavy bodies fall more rapidly than light ones. He would still be wrong, whether he wrought miracles or not. Galileo had reasons for believing that the earth revolved around the sun. Is that less true because he was an ordinary man and had no supernatural gifts?

Yet folks insist that Christianity depends on signs and wonders. The miracles of Christ substantiate his teachings. Disprove the one and you discredit the other. I don't see why. Listen to this: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." What has that got to do with miracles? "They who take the sword shall perish by the sword . . . whosoever would save his life shall lose it." Will walking on the water make that true or false? "Come unto me all ye who travail and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest . . . whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." That holds good whether he raised Lazarus from the dead or not.

A LAW-ABIDING GOD

Moral and spiritual truths are self-authenticating. The things Christ said are right, because men find them so by actual experience and by the normal testings of the human mind. Miracles have nothing to do with them. Matthew Arnold put the point in a nutshell when he wrote sarcastically: "In order to prove to you that what I have written is true, I will turn my pen into a pen-wiper."

But basically, I think, Jesus repudiated signs and wonders because he knew what God was like. An intelligent Being who manifests himself intelligently, in reasonable ways; a Creator who abides by the laws of his own creation and works through them—to think of God like this is a mark of spiritual maturity. Only primitive and childish minds regard him otherwise—as, perhaps, an arbitrary magician doing unaccountable things to the consternation and dismay of men. So it was, you may recall, with Moses, Elijah and Elisha—but not with the great seers like Amos, Jeremiah and Isaiah. They saw God working naturally through psychological and moral laws. The wiser the prophet, the more advanced and reliable his insights, the less he thinks of God in terms of miracle and magic. You can trace the record, if you will, in Scripture. As religion matures, it learns that what is normal is divine.

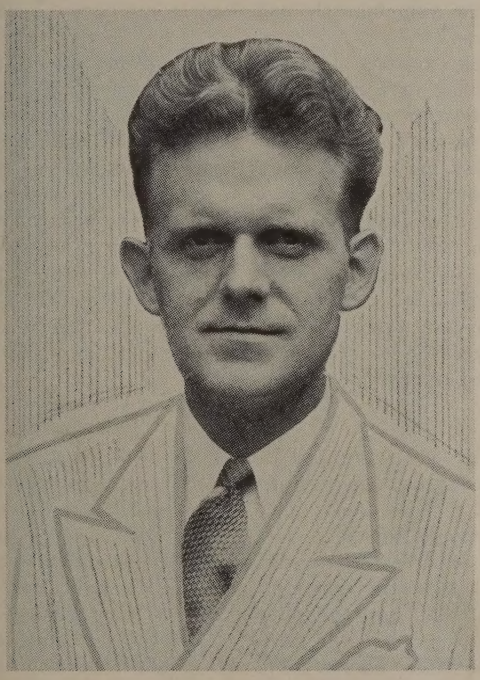
THE BEST IN LIFE IS NATURAL

Perhaps to some this seems a beggarly idea of God. Not at all. Since when is abnormality a sign of greatness? Here, for instance, is a man like Keats, who accepts all the limitations of intelligible language and all the burdensome rules of poetry, by patient effort masters them, and out of it creates a thing of beauty like "St. Agnes Eve." Now—is Gertrude Stein a greater artist because she does none of this, but writes gibberish instead? Of course not! The better the art the more natural it seems, the less forced and self-conscious. Or here is a man who stands to his word, is steady and reliable, is hard to ruffle or offend. Stack him up against some flighty, temperamental soul, who is always at the mercy of his whims and feelings, is constantly at loose ends, and is so unstable that you must choose each little word you say for fear of either hurt-

ing or enraging him. Which of the two is more the man? Obviously, the normal one.

So with God. At least, that is how Jesus, who was a master of things spiritual, thought of him. Like a father, welcoming the prodigal back home, or a shepherd seeking stray sheep. He found him in the face of a flower, in a commonplace child, in a cup of cold water given to a brother man. A grain of mustard seed revealed the universe; a piece of broken bread, a sacrament. He was not interested in signs and wonders. He saw God in commonplaces. What is normal is divine.

The point, I think, will bear more emphasis. Consider what it means—for instance, in regard to prayer.



JAMES M. LICHLITER

For many people that's a problem, but only because they are expecting signs and wonders. They think of prayer as something magical—a formula for procuring their own wishes painlessly, a sudden and pronounced experience of new energy, a mystical exercise that brings immediate results. As one writer put it: "They rub the lamp, and look for angels to appear." You recall Archbishop Trench's cheerful verse:

> We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
> We rise, and all the distant and the near
> Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear!
> We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!

That sounds lovely—but it rarely works that way. Plotinus, master-mystic though he was, prayed only four times in his life with such results; James Russell Lowell, only three. It is a rare experience in any man's life. Usually the answers are more commonplace. Frederick Douglass said that in the days of his slavery he used to pray for freedom, but that his prayer was not answered till it got down into his heels—and he ran away. We pray for patience, and God sends us an amateurish cook that we may study patience. Like Paul, we ask release from pain, and he gives us courage to endure it cheerfully. We pray for godliness, and he sends us Christ that we may hang his picture in our minds and slowly grow like him through fellowship and close association. In other words, prayer is not so much an experience as it is a process. Its effect is gradual, cumulative, normal; its answers commonplace. That's how God works.

Why then be disturbed by what psychology has to say about the matter? It is simply a description of the process, nothing more. Physics helps us to understand a bit about God's methods in the natural realm; history, in the social realm; psychology, in the mental realm. It analyzes the phenomenon and tells us what factors are involved and how the mechanism works. For one thing, there is association. We grow like what we live with and are loyal to. Then, there is autosuggestion. Just as the soil must be cultivated in order to produce good crops, so the mind must be fertilized by appropriate suggestion, study and self-discipline before it can know God. But notice, these are methods, the way things operate. They explain *how* prayer works, not *what* prayer is! The digestive organs transmute food into energy and blood and bone. Likewise, autosuggestion and association are the means whereby God, reaching up into our consciousness, makes himself felt. Perhaps, as psychology describes it, the process seems too natural. Yet God works that way, not by signs and wonders.

THE NATURE OF SALVATION

Or again, consider the matter of salvation. The same truth holds good here, too. What is normal is divine. Of course, we like to think of salvation as a spectacular experience, a cataclysmic conversion on the sawdust trail, an emotional revolution that makes one different overnight. The real thing involves signs and wonders. But that's not so. "I have had more trouble with myself than any other man I have ever met." Who said that? One of the greatest evangelists of the past century—Dwight L. Moody. "I buffet my body and bring it under subjection, lest having preached to others I myself should be a castaway." That is Paul—a saint! You see, there is no miracle that saves us once and for all, no soul-shattering experience that redeems us in a trice. Salvation, like prayer, is a gradual process. In doing little things for others, in a faithful devotion to the commonplace duties of the day, in a rigorous self-discipline—only so, over the years, do we grow toward the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

God comes into a man's life unobtrusively, in ordinary, undramatic ways. It's like the sort of thing that happened to Sir Evelyn Wrench, founder of the English-Speaking Union. He was hypnotized, he confessed, by worldly success. He wanted money in order to have power. That was his aim in life. Then he went to live with a cousin who had entirely different standards, who lived for others. It did things to him.

"In four years," he reports, "my mental and spiritual outlook changed . . . completely. Externally, I might look the same, but I was another individual." Salvation is like that. It means simply living with Christ and letting that association work the change. You see, a very natural thing.

GOD SENT—A CARPENTER!

So, too, in the matter of God's Kingdom. Men once thought of that in terms of signs and wonders. They expected the Messiah to come out of heaven, trailing clouds of glory, to inaugurate the millennium with supernatural power. But instead, God sent—a carpenter! This carpenter made a few friends and told them the secrets of God. They went out and spread the good news to others. So the Kingdom started—first the seed, then the blade, then the ear of corn. Very ordinary, natural, commonplace.

But that's how God works. As someone has put it, if God wants something done in the world, he brings two souls together by the winsomeness of love, and they have a child who grows into a Luther or a Lincoln. If he wants to kill bacteria, he puts the will to do it in Pasteur's heart. If he wants an inspiring message to reach a nation, he cries: "Whom shall I send—who will go for us?" And some Isaiah will reply: "Here am I, Lord. Send me."

So he labors to redeem the world, not by miracle, but through the devoted loyalty of ordinary human souls. He is busily at work in countless little parishes, where week after week unknown men and women seek to deepen their knowledge of his will and to ennoble their relationships with the love of Christ. At work in quiet Christian homes, where ideals are cherished and high thoughts articulated. At work among the saints and prophets, doctors, missionaries, social workers who are daily pouring out their lives for others. He uses natural methods to fulfill his great dreams for the world.

One day, so the story goes, Thomas Carlyle stood on London bridge and looked over into the squalor and filth of the East Side slums. The sight appalled him, and he was heard to say: "God does nothing." But a few years later another man stood and looked at the same sight, and took upon himself the task of cleaning out that pest-hole. God did something then! Browning is right:

> We find great things are made of little things,
> And little things go lessening, till at last
> Comes God behind. . . .

JESUS would spend all night in prayer—under a cloud thicker than any that may darken our day; the loss of his home, the hatred of foes against whom his only crime was righteousness and love, the treachery of friends, the cross at the last. Yet his prayers were wings. He reached the topside of even the cloud of the cross. There was might of prayer when the radiance of that upper world transfigured his face and made his very garments glistening. Our purest, expectant prayers are wings!

GEORGE A. BUTTRICK.

Christian Agnostics

BY ILION T. JONES

Now I know in part; but then shall I know fully as also I was fully known. I Corinthians 12:12b.

SOMEONE once called Paul a Christian agnostic because in that beautiful ode to love which constitutes the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians he confessed that he didn't know everything, but knew only "in part." Literally, he said "I know bit by bit," or "in fragments." When Paul frankly admitted that he had no certain knowledge of many things he was, at least in that particular, an agnostic. For an agnostic is one who honestly and humbly professes, "I don't know."

The reasons, I suppose, why anyone should feel justified in applying the term "Christian" to Paul's agnosticism are that Paul professed to know something, he believed that "then", in some dim and distant future, he might discover more knowledge, he considered that he knew enough at least to love and hope and have faith, and he believed Christ to be the embodiment of sufficient knowledge by which to live. The philosophic agnostic professing to know little merely exists on a bare residuum of information. The Christian agnostic making the same profession uses what little he does know as the foundation of a satisfying, creative, triumphant life.

I

All of us are agnostics in the sense that we go through life ignorant of ultimate things. Edison once said that we don't know one-millionth part of what we ought to know. Dr. Fosdick tells about a little girl who learned so many new things the first few days in school that each morning she awoke with a thrill, impatient to get to school to learn more. One day she said to her teacher, "Teacher, how long will it be before I know more than I do not know?" The teacher's answer is not recorded, but Dr. Fosdick adds: "Ah, little girl, you will never know as much as you do not know." Alas! at the end of life we will still be forced to confess that we know only "in fragments."

We do not know the "what" of things. Few men, even the most learned scientists, would claim that we know the nature of the things with which we daily deal and upon which life itself depends. What scientist, for example, claims to know the nature of the most materialistic of all things, matter itself? Dr. J. Arthur Thomson, a noted scientist, says: "This at least is certain, that when we describe occurrences in terms of matter and energy, life and mind, or any similar grand concept, we are working with what cannot be called self-explanatory. . . . Every one of them is big with mystery, though some are in the process of simplification. Much so-called 'explanation' is reducing unusual unintelligibility to order rather than to radical understanding."

We do not know the "how" of things. Most of us would confess with Voltaire: "I do not know how

I was made and how I was born. I do not know at all, during a quarter of my life, the causes of what I saw, or heard, or felt." Although Newton discovered gravity he said he could assign no cause to it, that he was unable "to reduce from phenomena the 'raison d'etre' of the properties of gravity," and that he would "not set up hypotheses."

We do not know the "why" of things. Why the earth is constituted as it is, or why man is subjected to suffering and pain, why all the evil of the world is permitted, why the universe is at times apparently indifferent and even antagonistic to man, we do not know.

Nor do we know the "whither" of things. There

Ilion T. Jones

is no way of determining with mathematical or any other kind of certainty how the universe, or history, or our decisions and ventures, personal and corporate, are going to turn out.

Moreover, from all that we have thus far been able to discover, it appears that we will be forced to go on in uncertainty for many centuries. The ancient story of the Tower of Babel is more than a mere myth or legend. It is the ancient's way of saying that man's efforts to storm heaven and find out the mysteries of God always fail. To the end of time we probably shall have to be satisfied with partial answers to questions and partial explanations of mysteries. Throughout life we shall be seeing "through a glass darkly."

Such admissions, however, in no way justify us in saying, as so many in our generation say, that there is nothing of which our generation can be sure, nothing we can believe with definiteness. Probably the figure of an earthquake is as apt as any other to describe the violent changes that have been taking place with breath-taking rapidity in the last few decades. Because those changes have been so many and so radical we have been told again and again that nothing whatever is left for us to stand upon, that we must consider the world every morning *de novo.*

Professor Randall, in his book, *Our Changing Civilization,* comparing the world represented by the German Museum at Munich with the world represented by a village in ancient Umbria, says: "There is not in that peasant's life one thought, one emotion, one action that has a place in this new world. The two realms are completely different; they could be no further apart if they belonged to different species." Walter Lippmann said that we are certain of nothing in our national life, that we cannot name a single concrete policy or principle which we can depend upon with clearest conscience and without hesitation and doubt. A circular prepared by the *Literary Digest* shortly before it suspended publication aptly expresses the temper of our age: "The whole world today is flying blind, over uncharted airways. There are no beacons, no precedents. No land in sight, no turning back upon the course."

Now, such sweeping generalities, such universal skepticism, such nihilism, are by no means warranted by the facts. Because knowledge is both partial and relative it is not therefore not dependable. There are some things we do know and they are precisely the things sufficient for us to live by. There is an irreducible mass of physical facts and forces which has been quite unaffected by the technical researches of science and the critical theories of philosophy. These facts haven't changed so far as is known since the dawn of history. The biological, chemical and electrical forces of the world are still operating just as they did before the depression, or before the war, or before the Renaissance. Chemists can go into their laboratories tomorrow morning and be quite confident that certain chemical reactions can be counted upon as they could be yesterday and a century ago. Farmers can sow their seed this spring and the next and be certain that a group of biological forces will continue to operate as they have since life appeared on the earth. Tomorrow we will reckon time by the sun and keep our sense of direction by the north star. Modern architects and engineers can be sure of the same mathematical principles with which Euclid dealt.

Likewise, there are certain psychic, moral, social and spiritual facts and forces which are the same as in the days of our remotest ancestors. The basic facts of human nature, of the human brain, of the operation of the human mind, of the human emotions, are known and are dependable and haven't changed to any appreciable degree since man first emerged as man. The fundamental principles of human relationships are no different now from what they were in the days of Cain and Abel. Human happiness and efficiency today are based upon the same moral and spiritual constants as they always have been. We know that certain things have always been wrong and cannot by any ingenuity of man be made to work out right in this

universe. Tyranny, war, brutality, bestiality, cruelty, inhumanity, selfishness, avarice, intemperance and unchastity have been thoroughly tested in the laboratory of human experience. If we know anything at all, we know that they are not wise and best for a contented and secure human existence. Not for nought has the human race gone through the fire for millenniums. Some truths *have* emerged from the agony. We *do* know that this works and that doesn't work. What we know is the irreducible minimum of truth which has been known for generations and which may be known and counted upon by each succeeding generation.

Granting, as we must, that we know "in part," that life is indeed a cross-word puzzle with many pieces missing, we still can put enough of the parts together to give us a skeleton pattern of certain areas. This is sufficient to justify certain adventures in many directions, and to assure not only partial success but enjoyment in the process. Our knowledge may be relative, but if it gives direction to life and goals for life, if by using it we discover life's values and satisfactions, if the very quest itself is thrilling, even romantic, then to that extent our knowledge is valid knowledge.

II

So we Christians maintain that we know enough to make life livable, if not entirely reasonable, and to justify our search for the better life. At the best we may have only semi-light, but that is enough to enable us to see a few guideposts. Certainly we are not enveloped in total darkness. If, after all available evidence is in, we still have only partial truth, we shall at least have enough knowledge to start our journey. If we keep up the quest we believe that as we move forward we will advance to still more knowledge and all the while will find sufficient knowledge undergirding us for a satisfying life. And if we are venturesome enough we may choose, with Ulysses, to follow what little knowledge we do have "like a sinking star beyond the utmost bounds of human thought."

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes rightly said: "What cannot be known need not be known in order to have a good life. We go through life staking our salvation on incomplete and imperfect knowledge. Life is like an artichoke; you pull out a leaf, but only the tip is edible." Well, if we succeed in discovering small bits of edible knowledge, knowledge that at least makes life itself edible, isn't that sufficient?

No man is a consistent, thoroughgoing agnostic. While the philosopher Hume claimed that he had no certainty about anything, not even his own mind, he went about talking and writing as if he had a mind, and enjoying life as though he understood it. After saying he was "ready to reject all belief and reasoning and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another," Hume confessed: "I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends." And he goes so far as to give expression to this bit of wisdom: "A true skeptic will be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical convictions; and he will never refuse any innocent satisfaction which offers itself, upon account of either of them." Agnostics—such as the late Clarence Darrow—don't know any more about the ultimate essence of water than the rest of us, but they know enough not only to drink water to sustain life but, as the popular saying goes, to come in out of the rain. They don't know any more about the chemistry of food than we, but they know enough to eat food that they may exist.

The most extreme philosophical idealists known are realists when it comes to the practical problems of human existence. They may not believe in an objective world but, like all other men, they must act as if they do. They would probably justify themselves on the ground that there are certain prior, practical assumptions essential to the continuance of life itself; that if we live at all we must act upon what appears to be working knowledge about our minds, about food and water and other phenomena of the universe, although when that knowledge is analyzed it cannot be called either scientific or complete.

By the same tokens, those of us who firmly believe in the good life insist that there are certain prior, practical, basic, moral and spiritual assumptions which are essential to the achievement of that good life. Upon what little knowledge we have of those assumptions we base our moral and religious adventures and quests. In actual fact it is no more accurate to say that we know nothing about religion than to say we know nothing about gravity and the chemistry of the soil. We know enough in each of these cases to make certain rational decisions and choices and to make practical moves in several directions. Moral and religious knowledge may not be of the same type as knowledge of physical sciences, but it is nevertheless scientific, dependable and workable. As Browning says:

> God stooping shows sufficient of his light
> For us i' the dark to rise by. And I rise.

Even if the light be dim we propose, at all costs, to use it to rise by. When someone pessimistically wrote "The sun of liberty has set," Benjamin Franklin wrote back "Then light up the candles." If we can't have the sunlight we will live by the light of the candles.

III

Again, we know enough to have faith, and to believe that faith is essential to the good life.

First, we have sufficient evidence to justify faith in God. There are all the evidences which scientific study itself provides us for the existence of some power holding the units of the universe together, keeping the forces within us and without us working together in an organic, orderly, systematic whole. On the basis of that evidence we choose to believe that the "something" upholding all things is "Somebody," one in quality with the rational and emotional natures we find in ourselves. That *is* a leap of faith, but it isn't blind faith. Something is operative in the universe. It produced and sustains us. To some of us at least it is not reasonable to believe that the universe can produce anything

greater than itself. We, therefore, choose to believe that the force back of the universe is Mind-stuff, Personality-stuff. That still leaves many unsolved problems, but no more than the belief that the universe is a personless, mechanistic system.

Santayana says: "There are only two radical alternatives open to human faith. Both are hypotheses. To accept either is to run a risk, to lay a wager; but the gamble is forced upon us by life itself. To live is to bet, because the conduct of life pledges all our poor assets, and pledges our soul, to the one side or the other." On the one hand, we may choose what he calls the "heathen philosophy," that this is a physical, or logical, or psychological (the term he says makes little difference) universe in which the soul and everything we love are pure incidents. Or we may choose to believe in the human heart, in the supernatural, to "impose on all natural facts and on all natural desires a supernatural interpretation." In the latter case, we and our souls become the most important of all phenomena. Faced with such alternatives we choose, not because we have certain, definite, precise, measured knowledge, but because of the results from our choices that flow into the stream of life itself.

> How do I know, you ask, that in the end
> God's power will conquer all, and through
> Eternity His love prove master of
> Our souls? Need I have proof?
> Tell you, sir, between a world of chaos
> And a world where God works on
> Through moments men call time there lies a choice,
> And I choose God.

Because we have faith in God we have faith in the goodness of the universe. To say that we cannot unravel the mystery of suffering and evil doesn't justify the position that we have no light whatever on these problems. We know that in addition to suffering and evil there are pleasure and good in the world, and that each of these requires as much explanation and justification as the other. We know that some suffering is punitive, and therefore just; that some is disciplinary, and therefore wise; that some is voluntary, and therefore noble. We know that the possibility of sin is wrapped up with the freedom of our wills, and that is desirable. In this selfsame universe other suffering, however, is irrational and, so far as we can see, damning. Nature is simultaneously both "red in tooth and claw" and shot through with self-forgetfulness and mutual aid.

If you choose to take pleasure and good as the key to an interpretation of the universe you have on your hands the problem of evil and pain. If you choose to take evil and pain as the key you have on your hands the problem of good and pleasure. Faced with this dilemma Christians unhesitatingly choose to believe that Love is controlling all things and that when at last everything has worked out to its ultimate fruition we will discover that Love has made even suffering and sin work out wisely and well. To be sure that leaves both mystery and perplexity on our hands, but so does the opposite belief.

Browning's Bishop Blougram says that you have really settled nothing by doubting. For in an unexpected moment, as a result of a "sunset-touch, a fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death, a chorus-ending from Euripides," you will be gripped with a haunting wonder about God. Then what have we gained by unbelief? Nothing, precisely nothing! We have but exchanged

> A life of doubt diversified by faith,
> For one of faith diversified by doubt:
> We call the chess-board white—we call it black.

But a life of faith diversified by doubt being more satisfying, more fruitful, more hopeful, we choose it. Not because everything is plain, but because life is more livable under such a belief.

And because we have faith in God and in his universe we have faith in ourselves as free spirits, as sons of God. To be sure we cannot prove with scientific assurance that we are such spirits. But every person knows, even if he knows little else, that he is himself distinguishable both from matter and from animals, and that there is within himself a series of values—variously called reason, conscience, moral judgment, free will, spiritual aspirations—which make him more than the clods and the beasts. Now it is our prerogative, if not our glory, to believe that all these values which are concomitants of our spirits, are sustained and nourished by God himself. Believing that, man goes forth proud and free to fulfill great purposes, to live nobly, courageously, dramatically, dangerously, triumphantly.

So our faith is all tied up in a single bundle with our valuations, with the quality and purpose of life, with its warp and woof. Because we believe in God and good and in the possibilities of our own souls and of our social experimentations, we have dynamic and energy for living beyond the passing moment and above the physical, for projecting our ideals and dreams into the future and pressing forward though everything for the moment seems against us. It is such faith that gives drive and motive power to life, that puts the shine into living. It makes human effort creative.

Finally, we have faith that if we have such faith we will discover fuller knowledge. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know." Using this text for a sermon Frederick W. Robertson took as his subject, "Obedience the Organ of Spiritual Knowledge." It is literally true that if we act on what knowledge we have we will discover more. Faith is the means to more knowledge. It is a way of making the ideals of the future present realities. This is wishful thinking, you say? Indeed it is! But it is also creative thinking. Thank God for it! It is man's chief claim to distinction!

> At two o'clock in the morning, if you open your window and listen,
> You will hear the feet of the wind, that is going to call the sun.
> And the trees in the shadows rustle and the trees in the moonlight glisten,
> And though it is deep, dark night, you feel that the night is done.

That "feeling" is a peculiar kind of knowledge, the knowledge of faith. It isn't blind credulity, for it is based on partial knowledge and limited experience. It contains, however, an element of venture, venture which accounts for the discoveries and achievements peculiar to man. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." It is both the glory and the joy of man that he walks "by faith and not by sight."

IV

Finally, we know enough to follow Christ. Taking a long range perspective of history, we believe we see purpose, divine purpose, emerging. Everything points to the appearance of man and finally to the appearance in and through man of great moral and spiritual values. The whole history of man's upward climb, of his wrestle and struggle with values, reveals a slow but sure approximation of the conceptions of God, of man, of the world, of man's duty, of values, of God's purpose for man, of happiness, of social hopes, revealed in Christ. We look at our chaotic world and we can see that the gospel of Christ is a political, economic and personal imperative.

Speaking in ultimate terms Christ is inevitable. Inevitably as society develops and man becomes more mature and civilization becomes more advanced and complex, the race comes to see that the only foundation of a secure and fruitful human existence, and of an abiding human happiness, is found in the truths revealed in Christ. In Christ we find the key to our human destiny, the key to the whole creative process.

Catching a gleam of that Light, we dare to follow him, believing that we cannot go astray, cannot miss our destiny, cannot fail to find life's abiding values. His truth fits the world, fits creation, fits man's unfolding life, fits our social and personal needs. We propose to follow him "through earth and sky and sea."

> Search not within the faded past for proof
> Of Christ's great message, whether it be true.
> Scan not the hieroglyphic warp and woof
> Of dim papyrus, as the scholars do.
> But test his word against the turning earth,
> On the world's grindstone whet and sharpen it.
> At the long last evaluate its worth
> In your own heart, to find if it should fit.
> Stake it beside the measurements of time.
> See, in its solvent right and beauty blend!
> Hark, how its undiminished accents rhyme
> With history of man, world without end!
> Behold, for future ages the display
> Of pale skywriting in the Milky Way.

Yes, we must be content with a partial answer to our questions, with a partial achievement of our personal and social dreams, but we have sufficient knowledge on which to launch our bark, and enough faith to believe that if we keep moving we shall at last reach a destination that will justify all effort. Wherefore, we are "stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we *know* that our labor is not vain in the Lord."

The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory

By Kenneth Irving Brown

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. Matthew 6:13 (margin).

THESE are the familiar words with which we conclude the Lord's Prayer. Biblical scholars tell us that very likely the words were not in the prayer as Jesus taught it to his disciples. Rather, it would appear that it is a doxology added about the third century, to give finish and completion to a prayer that was becoming formalized.

I purpose to take those words and to apply them to the members of our senior class. I am daring to change the antecedent of the pronoun from that so obviously intended, namely God, to you and to the generation of college-trained Americans of which you are a part. For thine—yours—is the kingdom; for thine—yours—is the power; for thine—yours—is the glory.

That may appear to suggest a commencement address of the sort so popular twenty years ago, when the graduate was told that he was stepping across the college threshold to possess the world. The world wanted leaders, and he was one. He, the college senior, was God's gift to an appreciative people. You know the outline.

But the world of the college graduate of twenty years ago in certain fundamental respects is not your world today, and you would laugh me out of court as ridiculously unrealistic if I were to bring you the address from such an outline. Yet, knowing this, I repeat: For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory—today, in the hard, realistic world of 1939, in which you may or may not get a job. For thine is the kingdom of an awakening mind, and the power of a tormenting heart, and the glory of the Christian hope.

I

For thine is the kingdom of an awakening mind. For some, that makes one sovereign of an empire and for some the ruler of an unimportant principality, such as Monte Carlo. That kingdom of the awakening mind some of you will rule as a king worthy; and that kingdom some of you will fail, abdicating for fancy's sake, or for weakness' sake, or for the woman you love. Some of you will establish progressive policies for that kingdom of the mind; some of you will, if the law of averages holds, let the tilled fields return to unmown grass.

I do not mean to be pessimistic; indeed I am not pessimistic. But I do not share the pleasant superstition that four years on a college campus, any college campus, is certain guarantee that the ruler will be made wise and the fate of the kingdom assured.

There are times when it is hard to tell, just by observation, whether an individual's education is a thin veneer certain to show wear in a few years, or solid walnut, good for ages. There is uncomfortable truth in the blasting dictum of President Robert M. Hutchins: "The degree the college of liberal arts of-

fers seems to certify that the student [meaning the ruler of the kingdom of the mind] has passed an uneventful period without violating any local, state or federal law, and that he has a fair, if temporary, recollection of what his teachers have said to him."

Construction is always a slower process than destruction. I recall Newton D. Baker saying of a certain Philippine school to which the boys of a certain tribe come, that when they come, they come naked, intellectually and dermatologically speaking. In four years so great is the success of the school that the natives' feet are uncomfortably encased in good American shoes. Graduation day comes. The students leave. Another year—one year—and they return as alumni; and some

KENNETH IRVING BROWN

of the alumni return naked, intellectually and dermatologically speaking.

I am saying this: You are the ruler of the kingdom of an awakening mind, but your success as that ruler will depend mightily upon your activities during the years ahead. As ruler there will be required of you intellectual integrity and a power of discernment and a willingness to face truth courageously.

Your diploma, to be sure, is a symbol of achievement, but it is also an earnest of the hope that the intellectual achievement the diploma signifies will be added to in time to come. I am suggesting hard thinking and then some more clear, straight, honest thinking; I am suggesting an unceasing effort to push back the crowding intellectual horizons. The high school student stands secure, confident, arrogant in his wisdom. The college senior, by the margin of four years' maturity, stands humble—less impressed by what he knows than by the measure of his ignorance, by the vastness of the unknown. I suggest also unceasing and uncompromising effort to observe accurately and to draw worthy conclusions from assembled evidence. That is not easy—nor popular.

The Old World is filled with monuments and memorials of all sorts and descriptions, but one of the most interesting is a monument to an error—a memorial in memory of a mistake. It stands in the city of Geneva, Switzerland. Back in the middle of the sixteenth century the city of Geneva was under the mighty influence of John Calvin, the great reformer. No one will doubt the progressiveness of that rule, but within it there were excesses that deserve no admiration. Calvin was not always able to grant to others the freedom of conscience he sought for himself and his followers. Those who disagreed with him were heretics, and the mouth of a heretic must at all cost be stopped. More than one mouth was stopped and among those persecuted was a Spaniard, a distinguished theologian and physician, Michel Servitus. Michel Servitus was accused of heresy, was tried before the consistory, and was condemned. In ignominy he was taken out to Champel, tied to a stake and burned alive. But today in Champel there is a simple stone monument to Michel Servitus. It was erected in 1908 by "respectful and grateful sons of Calvin"—sons who condemned the mistake which their intellectual forefather had made and raised this stone as an expiatory monument.

I know of no other public monument in memory of an error, but the idea has value. In the kingdom of an awakening mind there should be a park for such monuments, regretted errors, and stupid blunders by which others have suffered. And, although it may be too late for a monument to bring Michel Servitus to life again, such public recognition of a change of mind and of heart is a healthy thing for the ruler of the kingdom of an awakening mind.

II

For thine is the power of the tormenting heart. In Stefan Zweig's drama, "Jeremiah," in a conversation between the sentries, these words are spoken: "God has given us a heart precisely that it may torment us."

I grant you at once that this power of the tormenting heart is not the kind of power that the college student most readily thinks of. This is not the exercise of authority over one's fellow men; this is not climbing to the top of the ladder and then directing through a Hollywood megaphone the lives of those below you. But the tormenting heart is nevertheless a source of personal power if rightly and wisely used.

There are many ways in which religion and education work, or should work, in partnership. And the tormenting heart is one contribution which they together can make.

Of late I have come to the conclusion that we are often guilty of asking of life certain things which life at its fullest cannot give. We ask of life security, and life instead offers uncertainty, and at its best must forever continue to offer us uncertainty. We ask of life ease, and life at its best fills our hands with tasks to be done. We ask of life peace and joy, expecting surcease

from trouble and pain, and life at its best answers our desires with a peace which is born of struggle and joy filled with tears.

> Peace does not mean the end of all our striving,
> Joy does not mean the drying of our tears;
> Peace is the power that comes to souls arriving
> Up to the light where God himself appears.

We ask of life calm and in return we are given the tormenting heart. But with it comes power. Paul looked upon life with a zeal to win it for Christ and nothing else in the whole world mattered so much to him as that; and he cried: "I am crucified with Christ, yet I live; nevertheless not I but Christ liveth in me." Lincoln saw the slave market in New Orleans and there was born in him the determination that if ever the chance came, he would hit that traffic and would hit it hard. Their tormenting hearts brought them both power.

Many of you seniors call yourselves Christians. For some that may mean a nominal church connection; for others, I know that it means vastly more than that: it means a dedication of your life in service; the disciplining of your mind and body and spirit for the effectiveness of that service; the determination to keep yourself sensitive to human need and the resolution not to be found with empty hands in the presence of that need. But that is personal; that happens to you, within you. In addition, your Christian experience has brought you those hours when you found yourself not an isolated individual struggling for righteousness, but a thread in a cosmic fabric, an orb in a spiritual solar system. You were conscious of union beyond yourself. Power flowed into you and through you from sources beyond your control. In the increasing measure that you were able to live up to your highest self, power came. I suggest that some of that power came to you as a result of a tormenting heart.

For your generation, concerned with life and achievement, Jesus brings not so much peace as discontent, not so much ease as the demand for struggle. The Hound of Heaven can make men mighty miserable—yes, miserable and mighty—for from that very misery there can come power.

That was the experience of the man who wrote: "Jesus' terrific care for people one by one, his indignations against institutions that hurt people, one by one, his insistence on testing every social custom and institution by what they do to people one by one—that is the fountainhead of the most tireless and dependable social devotion this earth will ever know."

Knowledge is not enough; to knowledge there must be added eyes that look upon life with sympathy and a heart capable of being stirred by human need.

III

For thine is the glory of the Christian hope.

I have been puzzling all year over the question, Why did Paul include hope as one of the three cardinal virtues? "And now abideth faith, hope, love," he wrote to his Corinthian friends, "these three, and the greatest of these is love." To be sure the greatest of these is love; we are quite willing to accept the statement theoretically, even as we may choose to act in contradiction to it. And faith—we recognize the importance of faith. But why hope? And why put it even above faith? I think that in some degree I have come to understand Paul's insistence upon hope as an essential, primary characteristic of the follower of Jesus.

Hope is a virtue which has been much belittled in our day. In fact we have lost sight of the greatness of hope which the writers of the Bible saw and have reduced it to a tenth-rate virtue, seen largely in caricature. Hope is not crying for the moon; hope is not a defiance of all things possible. Hope is essentially desire—desire allied with an expectation that the desire can be fulfilled. Faith is the intellectual prop for the expectant hope.

Our day has very largely lost hope; and still more tragic, it has come to the point of thinking that it dare not desire hope, that somehow in a scientific world hope is an anachronism, an outrage to our intellectualism. Moreover, we are a hurrying people, too busy for hope. We want what we want when we want it, or if possible a little bit sooner. And in this mood, we have little taste for waiting. The long view is distasteful to us. We are inclined to take a rather patronizing attitude toward Deity when we are told that the earth has been millions of years in creation: we are quite confident that we could have hurried it through in less time than that.

What I am saying is this: our generation has a distaste for hope which is borne of our attachment to scientific and pseudo-scientific thought, and to our mood of let's-get-it-done quickly.

The Creator-God is a leisurely God; man will do well to seek that timelessness instead of crying, as Studdert-Kennedy has the creature-man cry in his poem:

> Why don't ye bust the show to bits
> And force us to do your will?

God apparently doesn't choose to work that way. We cannot tell why the world must climb by such painful steps, why anything is and why anything is as it is; these are ultimate mysteries. But as Dr. George Buttrick has said it for us: "We cling to the faith that if there had been any other way for God to bring us to a perfect stature, any better way than the way of sacrifice, he would have chosen it."

This is the essence of the glory of the Christian hope: that ours is no topsy-turvy world running amuck among undiscerning planets, but a world intricate, delicately organized, created by a loving, discriminating intelligence; that man is no unhappy "fortuitous concurrence of atoms," a cosmic accident to be regretted, but that man is the holy work of time, by means of the evolutionary process, fashioned after eternal patterns, illumined by a reasoning mind and a responsive spirit which in some inexplicable way must correspond to the mind and the spirit of the creator; that God himself is neither dead as some would have us believe, not a madman playing stupidly with the kindergarten blocks of our lives, but a guardian spirit, like unto a father who cares for the difficulties of his children. That, I

take it, is our Christian hope. If this be nonsense to you, then in spite of grades and academic gown and diplomas, our college has failed to do her work in you. If this be the basis of your hope, the glory of which lights your soul, then indeed has your training here given you a priceless gift.

I can think of no greater glory than this glory of the Christian hope. Human fame is brief and often bitter; the rocket flares and the crowd applauds, and then come darkness and forgetting. Human glory is ephemeral and transient. But the glory of the Christian hope sheds a lasting radiance into the darkness of our personal moods, into the gloom of our difficulties and disappointments, into those despairing and clutching fears which inhabit the valley of the shadow. The world sorely needs such hope. The world needs to dare to hope for such a hope—for its present mood is not conducive to hope. If by any chance some of you, in the multitude of opportunities which will come, can pass that hope on to others, your years will not have been wasted.

For thine is the kingdom—the kingdom of an awakening mind; and the power—the power of a tormenting heart; and the glory—the glory of the Christian hope. Forever and ever. Amen.

"When spring comes." We look out into man's world and we see these sad nations and men. Some of them are, so it seems, very wicked; some of them are bitterly vengeful; some of them are coldly set on making or keeping a prodigious portion of the wealth of the world for themselves; some of them are tragically and innocently caught in traps they did not set. We see them locked in this fearful struggle of death. We see our own nation nervously arming for this or future wars. We look out into God's world and we see something very different; we see a calm, unfailing power working quite silently and gently, a power which makes for life and song, for flowering shrubs, for bursting buds, for singing birds, for blue skies and warm rains, for green fields and laughing children.

I dream—I pray that my country may, under the great argument of spring, choose to serve the God of Life who makes beauty "boil over" and drenches the earth with it, rather than to serve the God of War who makes men's hearts boil over with bitterness and drenches the earth with death. The old, old issue is up again! It is God or Mammon; Christ or Caesar; the High Way or the Low. No nation under heaven was ever more perfectly situated to take the great step forward and to lead toward days when wisdom and love, rather than selfishness and hate, shall tip the scales of human conduct. Boynton Merrill.

Awareness of the reality of God is the essence of worship. When one experiences the presence of God for himself, then he is indeed a worshiper. It is one thing to know about a truth from books and teachers; it is quite another thing to experience a truth for oneself. Then it becomes his own personal possession, a part of his own thinking.

Lucius H. Bugbee.

Half-Truths

By William S. Abernethy

These men do exceedingly trouble our city. Acts 16:20.

A HALF-TRUTH may easily be very damaging. Like every other minister I receive frequent letters from pulpit committees, asking me what I think of the Reverend so-and-so and "would he be a suitable man for us to call to our pulpit?" Yes, I know the man. He is a very good preacher and a likable chap. He has had excellent training and his character entitles him to an A-1 rating. Shall I recount all these excellent qualifications and let it go at that? I would be telling the truth, but it would be a half-truth. The brother has another side. He seems to have an unfortunate disposition or he has no idea of financial responsibility, or there is something else on the debit side. The result is he does not stay long in a pastorate. A half-truth might result in a call, the whole truth would most certainly be against him.

One can make out a pretty good case if he recounts only the virtues and a pretty desperate case if he confines himself to the vices. It has been said, "There is enough good in the worst of us to make an angel and enough bad in the best of us to make a devil." Let one confine himself to truthful statements only and the result while complimentary may not tell the whole story. A college publication, with the idea of boosting a certain school, announced that of the previous graduating class fifty per cent of the boys and one hundred per cent of the girls had married within six months—a fact that made quite an impression among the matrimonially inclined until it became known that the class consisted of two boys and one girl and the girl had married one of the boys.

It is well to have all the facts. A half-truth may have all the effect of a lie.

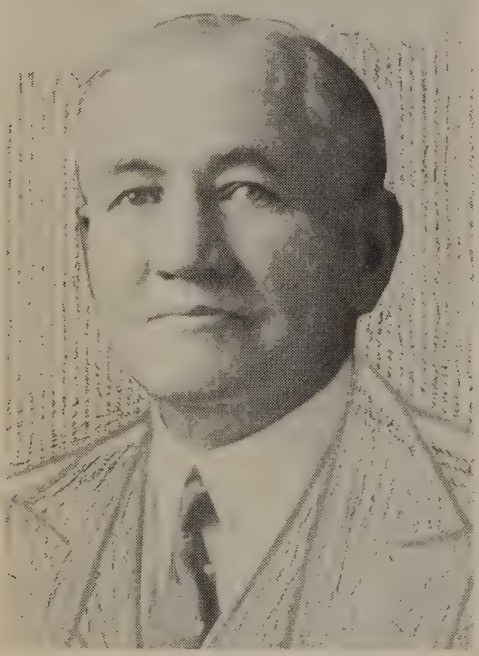
PAUL AS A TROUBLE MAKER

Here is the Apostle Paul facing a serious charge. He and his traveling companion, Silas, are at Philippi. They have just interfered seriously with the profits of a notorious racketeer of that city. When they were arrested and dragged into court the charge brought against them was that given in our text: "These men do exceedingly trouble our city." Perfectly true! They had troubled the city—that is, they had troubled a certain element in the city. They had healed a poor demented girl and had thereby deprived the scoundrel, who was exploiting her, of his ill-gotten profits. No wonder the man was troubled.

When you touch the pocket nerve you are bound to get a reaction. Interfere with the profits of gamblers, rum-runners, bootleggers, white slavers and the rest of their ilk, and a howl goes up. What preacher who has made any attempt to rid his city of these white-livered scourges does not know something about that? Certainly Paul was a trouble maker, but that was only half the story. Bring in a bill of particulars, gentle-

men. State the whole truth and not half of it. When you talk of the way your business has been injured by these trouble makers, as you call them, tell the court also of that wretched girl you have been exploiting, whom they have released. Tell them the whole truth, not just the part that suits your fancy.

But half-truths have always been more convenient to handle. They have a clever sound. They make a better story if carefully used. Jesus was confronted at his trial with a mass of half-truths. "He calls himself a King!" So he does, but tell the rest of it. He is no rival of Caesar. His is another realm. "He said if this temple were destroyed he would raise it again in three days." Correct! He did say that, but go on—



WILLIAM S. ABERNETHY

tell the rest. Tell the trial court and the people that he was speaking of his own body and not of their house of worship. "We accuse him of trying to pervert the nation." All right, but we dare you to tell the whole truth. "He is an evildoer!" According to your standards, you mean. Make a clean breast of it all and tell us upon what you base so serious a charge.

One could make out a very bad case against Christianity if he dealt only with half-truths.

THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

For example, one could prove from Scripture that it is a religion of repression and subtraction, if he confined himself to half the truth. "Deny yourself," said Jesus, "if you wish to follow me." Peter gave up his nets and boats, Matthew gave up his occupation. Paul has much to say about things that do not belong to the Christian way of living which must be given up. All this taken together has perhaps helped to spread the idea that following Christ means giving up most of the joy-producing pursuits of life. Some wag has said that most of the things he liked to do were either illegal or immoral or the doctor said he couldn't. That idea certainly exists in the minds of some. Christianity is a religion of suppression, of subtraction. But that is only half the truth. The other half must certainly be told —the addition side of it, the gain, the increase. Why is it that people are prone to dwell more on their losses than their gains, on their days of ill health rather than their weeks of sound health? Two days of rainy weather will outweigh in importance two weeks of glorious sunshine. One discourtesy bulks larger than a long run of kindliness. It is a queer quirk of human nature that retains the memory of the uncomfortable and the disagreeable so much longer than the bright and beautiful and lovely.

Christianity is a religion of subtraction, perhaps, but that is not a complete picture. When the columns are footed up and a balance is struck, it is all in favor of the addition side.

DID JESUS ADVOCATE WAR?

Again, one might make out a very good case if he were to say that Christianity advocates violence. I have heard not a few arguments in justification of war but when I hear a preacher attempt to use the words of Jesus to strengthen his argument, then I want to get right up in meeting and protest. Exactly *that* I did hear however. "I came not to bring peace on the earth but a sword." "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." And when the preacher had quoted these passages and had pictured Jesus laying the scourge on the backs of the luckless money-changers, he seemed to feel that he had made out a pretty good case. Half-truths, brother! Jesus also said, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." You forgot that one, did you not? Or perhaps it did not exactly lend itself to your argument. One has only to examine the context to discover how utterly ridiculous it is to present Jesus as a witness on the war-making side. Christianity a religion of violence? If one is so lacking in accuracy or perhaps honesty as to seize upon half-truths and present them as the whole truth, very likely that is the fact. But there is another side that we dare not forget. "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." Jesus said that too.

Or one might say, if he wants to deal in half-truths, that Christianity is a religion of hate. That too could find scriptural proof. "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother [and all the other relatives] he cannot be my disciple." "He that loveth his life shall lose it and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Hate! Hate! It is an ugly word, not supposed to be used in circles of respectability. But it fell from Jesus' lips more than once. The careless reader or the one willing to accept half-truths might argue that hate is an accepted Christian principle. But when and why does Jesus advocate hate? Only that love may be the more emphasized. That is the other side of the picture.

Finally, it is possible to gain the notion that Christianity discounts everything of a material nature that this world has to offer. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on the earth." "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom." "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom." There you have it. What could be plainer than that? Wealth here and spiritual attainment have nothing in common. Take your choice, for you cannot have both. Is not that what Jesus seems to say? Half a truth, again. He is talking about a love which amounts to worship. We are not told that money is the root of all evil, but the love of it. Dr. Moffatt very likely has it right when he makes Jesus say, "How difficult it is for those who *rely on money* to get into the Kingdom." Nowhere does the Bible say that it is a sin to be rich. It does say that the possession of money entails terrific difficulties. Am I wrong in feeling that if the rich young ruler had started to obey Jesus he would have called him back saying, "I merely wanted to see if you were willing to do it"?

It is possible so to read the Bible as to get an altogether distorted idea of what it really teaches. It is possible to make Jesus say what he never intended to say. The whole truth is what we want, not half of it. The honest man does not play with half-truths. He knows that while they may be clever, they may also be very damaging.

Confession of Faith

THE FAITH I confess is the faith that the conscious life of the spirit does not terminate with the life of the body; that the physical organism is the shelter or the temple of an immortal life; that death is but the departure of the immaterial intelligence from its material habitation; that when the body returns to dust, as it was, the spirit returns unto God.

My deepest reason for believing in the everlasting life is my belief in the everlasting love. I am sure that the universe is reasonable. All science rests on that assumption. I am equally sure that it would not be reasonable, if it were not grounded in love. And love is the heart of the universe. Because I believe in a God of love, I believe in a future in which life can come to completion, and in which the millions to whom life in this world has been but a melancholy failure may come to their own.

I believe in the continuance of conscious life after death. I believe that this conscious soul will have after death *a form of appearing*—that it will be personalized, individualized, in such a form of life. I believe that this form of appearing will be the *human form divine* in its ideal perfection.

WASHINGTON GLADDEN.

WHEN a storm strikes an eagle, he sets his wings in such a way that the air currents send him above the storm by their very fury. The set of the wings does it. The Christian is not spared the pains and sorrows and sicknesses that come upon other people, but he is given an inner set of the Spirit by which he rises above these calamities by the very fury of the calamities themselves.

E. STANLEY JONES.

GREAT MEN are only a little better than ordinary men. The brave soldier is only a little braver than the others. The great poet is only a little better than the common dreamer of dreams. But to take that extra step, to go that "little farther"—that makes all the difference between a saint and a good man. Jesus had the courage to go all the way; he dared to leave the world behind; he had the devotion to march straight on to God. "He went a little farther."

JOHN RAY EWERS.

A Pastoral Prayer

BY KING D. BEACH

IN the blessed company of those who would fain know Thee more and more, we seek this morning, O God, to stir each other up and to stir ourselves up in all that is Christlike. We take hold of Thee and will not let Thee go. Not that Thou dost desire to escape us; on the contrary Thou dost seek those who worship Thee in spirit and in truth. But we yield so easily to the tyranny of the visible, to pretense, to self-seeking, to physical urges, that sometimes we grieve Thee and lose Thee even while we are speaking sacred phrases. Despite our awkwardness and earthiness, fulfill Thy promise, O God, that those who seek Thee honestly shall find Thee.

We need more than a few patches of Christian living sewn to the garment of worldliness where it is most seriously worn and torn. We need to put on the whole new garment of righteousness. May our repentances cover not merely the sins which have immediately brought trouble to us, but also all words and deeds and omissions and plans which have been disloyal to Thee or hurtful to the least of Thy children. We await Thy word coming not as a violent fire which burns and destroys without restraint, but as a steady flame which gives to those who are willing light and guidance for daily living.

For the sick and suffering, the weary and the sad, we pray—remembering by name and face certain dear ones. For the lost who are too confused to find the way, we pray, and for the deeply burdened, the anxious, the defeated. Not only by our prayers but also by our thoughtful understanding may we help, and help particularly in the most important way of all, by aiding them to know Thee, the Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Country Church Is Different!

By Martin Schroeder

IT is more than a passing headache which the rural parish is causing the Christian church at the present time. The disturbance, euphemistically called "problem," is organic. A former indifference to the occasional pain which the country church was to many a denominational headquarters now makes it necessary to plan a series of major operations, provided they see the need of restoring the sufferer back to a useful life.

The assumption still exists that one type of preacher, leaving school, could serve either city or country church with equal ease and efficiency. From my own student days I well remember a lecturer who, belonging himself to the old "no-difference" school, addressed us hopefuls. "Gentlemen," he counseled benevolently, "it may do you no harm to spend the first five or ten years of your ministry in a country church." However, the context made it plain that the real stakes for the man with a message are in the city, where thousands live within reach of his influence and hear him preach—if they will come. The man who lectured might have been heard in almost any seminary. It was, and with some still is, "the line."

• *Life Service to Rural Church*

This writer fell for it. Promptly upon graduation he assumed the pastorate of a tiny, isolated parish. Five years passed. Ten years passed. He was still in the country. About that time he wrote an article on "The Attractions of the Rural Pastorate" which the editor of the *Expositor* found printable. In that article he went the lecturer one better. Instead of speaking of five to ten years among the farmers, the advice was given to set aside at least the first ten to fifteen years in the rural community. Since then ten more cycles of summer and winter have joined their predecessors, and still he finds himself, though in a changed relation, attached to the country church.

Today, after more than two decades of intimate contact with rural church life, he sees again the necessity of revising his estimate of the length of time a ministerial candidate should plan to spend in the country. To the man casting about for a field of labor he would say, if there is at all any serious thought in the direction of the small-community congregation, to set aside at least the first forty years of his ministry for the purpose, and for the time being eliminate notions of the enchanting city pulpit from his mind altogether. From the beginning it must be one thing or the other. Mixing the two separate types of labor in mind and practice is hard on preacher and congregations. Our purpose here is to correct, where necessary, our thinking in regard to country versus the city church as fields of labor, and to give reasons for this ever advancing change of mind concerning the length of time a man should spend in the country.

These reasons, which the perspective of years affords, are very simple. One is that, after you have approached

Martin Schroeder

your rural ministry with a purpose, you become a part of the setting. Your interests merge with those of the people you serve. You see their needs and the paucity of leadership to remedy deficiencies. If your heart is in it, you simply cannot break away. The other cause for this changing attitude comes by observation. The country is still dotted with prosperous rural congregations. What made them so prosperous, other things being equal, over against the problem community? The answer is not found in the name of the denomination, nor in the pulpit message primarily, but in the parsonage where you will find, almost invariably, long time residents. In other words, a continuously settled ministry is the prerequisite to achieve fortification of the rural church.

• *Why Rural Churches Close Up*

The wholesale closing of country churches must be ascribed to a great extent to preachers who were victims of the popular fancy that the city is the only place for the up-and-coming man of God to find a responsive field. Denominational guidance, with few shining exceptions, has failed uniformly in either maintaining or rehabilitating the resident rural pastorate. Witness the tens of thousands of liquidated rural churches, a waste in which religious leaders are not guiltless, though a belated change in attitude becomes more and more evident.

Let us make it plain. If for any reason a man feels that his call into the ministry precludes successful work in the country, he should put such work out of his mind completely. Never, not for five years or one (while waiting for the other call), not for one day should he impose himself upon a trusting farmers' congregation. The harm and havoc which such attitude has wrought in the rural field cannot be measured, though it is evident as the light of day. To enter the rural ministry with divided heart and mind is next thing to desecrating the humble place of worship. No man whose thoughts take flights to the city can warm a farmer's heart.

• *Special Preparation Is Necessary*

To assume that preparation for the rural ministry does not require special training is a too common fallacy. With this same sort of reasoning one might consider that a teacher or physician may work his way through any course leading to a general degree, hoping that the question of skill in a special line will take care of itself in due time. No one would ever think that way. But with the ministry it is different. Our city-located theological schools train future pastors with the more or less alluring near-by city churches as ever present seducers to fill head and heart with city ideologies. Of all such institutions of every denomination and description only twenty-seven in the entire country give any semblance of recognition that a great portion of their students will have to work in sparsely populated districts. The result is many an unhappy ministry, the man finding himself in places for which God never intended him.

Taking it for granted that in the course of years church leadership will recognize the manifest claims of the country parish for a consecrated single-minded ministry, the question may now be asked, What qualities enter into the making of such a rural ministry? But before answering, it would be good to eliminate some erroneous suppositions which have kept good men

rom giving serious thought to the work we have here in mind.

• *Two Unfortunate Misconceptions*

There looms up the often heard remark, that the real country parson must be country bred for necessary background and experience; the scent of the sod must be in his clothes. Nothing can be farther from the truth. For the same reason all foreign missionaries ought to be foreign born if they are to understand the natives and their problems. Again, with the same logic, it could be argued that city pastors, professors and editors should necessarily have been born in the shadows of cathedrals, universities or sky-scraping city blocks. Not where a man is starting from determines his value for church and society, but the goal that in God's name is set before him.

Another misconception must be put aside. It is frequently assumed that the city is entitled to the cream of the ministerial supply, the skimmed portion to be left for the farmers' churches. For one thing, skimming should be done before men ever get near the seminary, or, if they should take the first hurdles, should be removed from circulation in the ministerial atmosphere before getting far in any formal training. It goes without saying, irrespective of future disposition in town or country, only the choicest in purpose should be found in any congregation. Albeit, the scramble for large student bodies occasionally brings into the group those who have no place in the ministry anywhere, and usually it is the country or unpromising small town church that has to put up with this unpromising timber, the result of a faulty selective process. The effect of such policy is written in unmistakable letters over many a closed country church, where a purposeful leader could have changed history.

• *Secrets of Success in Rural Field*

In weighing qualifications highly desirable in the man who will preach to farmers, the acquisition of which will set him aside for rural work in particular, let us turn now to the positive side.

1. He should possess a workable concept of rural life. The first lines in Holy Writ point helpfully in that direction. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Here you look at the two basic elements with which the tiller of the soil must work. Unceasingly we are reminded of the fact that from the earth man was taken and made a living soul, and from the earth he must daily derive the substance that keeps him a living soul. It is this earth, its nature and organic matter which the farmer shapes for maintaining human existence. The meaning of his life and work is therefore so much different from the city dweller's occupation, being primarily mechanistic, using nature's raw products, shaping them into artifices, often making them his idols before which he bows down.

• *Self-Sacrificial Patriotism*

2. He should be possessed also of a patriotic impulse to serve the nation. It is a well known fact that the nation's only net increase in population is found in towns and country, and there mostly among the farming portion of the people—pointing to the farm as the most wholesome place for a normal family life. The actual increase in city population depends upon the supply the country releases. What sort of church members this released section will make in the city is conditioned by the type of church they attended back home. Perennially the rural pastor must watch this exodus of promising young people whom the economic conditions of the country force, and the lights of the city entice, to make this change of location. Whereas city congregations often give impressive receptions to new acquisitions in membership, country churches might appropriately institute farewell services to the annual crop of farm youth whom fate or choice compels to leave the land and the city church gladly receives. To observe this continuous stream of one's spiritual products headed for other churches, for other pastors to enjoy their possession, requires fortitude and a Christian patriotism which places the welfare of his country above the bewitching gratification of ambition.

• *Knowledge of Bible Economics*

3. He must have also an understanding of biblical economics. It is not enough for the country preacher to be acquainted with the intricacies that are needed for guiding people in treating their souls in accordance with the original texts. These same original texts, though usually ignored in the study of fundamentals, give directions in the treatment of human needs other than those of the soul. Here belong the Sabbatical regulations of land ownership, the disposition of the fruit of the land, the wage problem as interpreted by Jesus in the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, and the cooperative trend described in the Acts of the Apostles. Each one is a contributing factor, if applied, in overcoming interferences with the nation's "pursuit of happiness," of which we are so conscious at this present time. So far, the church has sidestepped reading and emphasizing those pages in the Scriptures, fearing their unpopularity. It is the rural pastor's opportunity to shed light in that direction.

Shepherd of souls that he is, he cannot ignore the fact that these souls live on land which with its fruit is just as much God-given as man's inner and spiritual possession. Such pastor must be trained, or train himself, to understand the relation of these two worlds, the inner and the outer, under the inspiration of nature's God. Such realization cannot be acquired one day and discarded the next in exchange for a city complex. Either aspect of life requires a whole personality in the ministerial office to do justice to the widely diversified needs of the people over whom the shepherd is set.

• *The Rural Pastor a Distinct Type*

Why did such spiritual giants as Charles Kingsley and Frederic Oberlin repeatedly refuse the inducements of metropolitan pulpits in favor of their "unimportant" farming parishioners? Because the silent plea that spoke out of the need of their rural surrounding was more commanding to those two sensitive souls for the direction of their energy, than the fame which preaching to a massed population might offer.

For these reasons, to mention but a few, the country parson represents a distinct type which cannot be shifted indiscriminately from one field of church activity to another with impunity, a fact to which church administrators have paid scant attention. It will not do to turn candidates out according to a set standard and leave it to chance and accident that deficiencies will be corrected in case the man should find his field of endeavor in the country.

• *Adjustments to a Changed World*

The often heard plea not to draw a distinction between rural and urban aspects of the ministerial office is contradicting the facts. It is true, there was a time when the above mentioned claims were not crying out loud as they do now, but that time is passed. The changes through which the world has passed during the last generation imply a myriad of adjustments. The church cannot stand alone trusting that she can escape making provision for adapting her methods and thinking to the various needs of her different groups, among which the farmer and the small community, without whom the city church would starve, occupy a strategic place.

Unless the church and each individual pastor give heed to the respective importance and type of religious work in both city and village churches, Christianity as a whole may, by political action or popular attitude, be assigned in the national life a position void of authority and respect. Don't say, "It cannot happen here."

• WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE •

Rev. C. EUGENE CONOVER, *with degrees* from the College of Wooster and Union Theological Seminary, held two pastorates in the presbytery of Cincinnati, and then went to Oxford, Ohio, as Presbyterian university pastor at Miami University. He is now president of the Triennial Conference of Church Workers in Colleges and Universities.

After a notable ministry of fourteen years at First Christian Church, Bloomington, Ill., Rev. EDGAR DE WITT JONES went in 1920 to Central Church, Detroit, Mich.—now Central Woodward Christian Church—where he still ministers. He has held several posts of honor and responsibility in his own communion and was president of the Federal Council of Churches in 1937-38. He has written many books.

Graduating from Harvard University in 1933, Rev. JAMES M. LICHLITER spent two years at Union Seminary and one year at the Episcopal Seminary in Virginia. He served for two years as Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, St. Louis, and in 1938 became rector of Calvary Episcopal Church, Columbia, Mo., which serves the Episcopal students in the University of Missouri, Stephens College and Christian College.

Rev. ILION T. JONES *has been minister* of First Presbyterian Church, Iowa City, Iowa, and director of the Westminster foundation at the State University of Iowa since 1935. Earlier pastorates were at Corsicana and San Antonio, Texas. Mr. Jones received his B.D. degree from Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Chicago, and his MA. from Columbia University. He has published two books: *Is There a God?* and *For Times of Crisis.*

Having received his education at the University of Rochester and Harvard University, Dr. KENNETH IRVING BROWN taught English at Harvard for three years, then went to Stephens College in Columbia, Mo. In 1930 he became president of Hiram College where he delivered the Commencement address included in this issue. Next fall Dr. Brown begins a new task as president of Denison University.

Rev. WILLIAM S. ABERNETHY *has ministered* at Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, D. C. for the past nineteen years. Earlier pastorates were at Berwyn (Chicago), Ill. and Kansas City, Mo. Mr. Abernethy was for a year president of the Northern Baptist Convention and has been active in the national missionary work of his church.

Rev. KING D. BEACH *is minister at* Trinity Methodist Church, Kansas City, Mo.

Rev. MARTIN SCHROEDER *is rural work* representative for the Board of American Missions of the United Lutheran Church in America.

TITLES AND TEXTS — What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

CLARENCE W. KEMPER, First Baptist, Denver, Colo. "The Unfailing Light." John 1:5—"The light is still shining in the darkness, for the darkness has never put it out." (Goodspeed) (Sermon preached at Northern Baptist Convention.)

FREDERICK A. ROBLEE, First Presbyterian, Bay City, Mich. "The Protestant Awakening." Gal. 5:1—"For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage."

DONALD B. BLACKSTONE, Church of the Covenant, New York. "Christianity and the Irreligious." Mark 2:17b—"I did not come to invite the pious but the irreligious." (Goodspeed)

FRED L. MARTIN, Methodist, Pahokee, Fla. "The Good Earth." Psalm 33:5—"The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

FOR YOUR SERMON AND TEXT

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Title of Sermon

.....
Text used (write out the text)

.....
Name of minister

.....
Name of church

.....
Address

BOYNTON MERRILL, Second Church in Newton, West Newton, Mass. "When Spring Comes." Psalm 27:11—"Teach me Thy way, O Lord."

ARCHIBALD F. WARD, Calvary Baptist, Towson, Md. "Getting Along Without Alibis." Luke 14:18a—"With one accord they all began to make excuse."

R. B. MONTGOMERY, President Lynchburg College. "The Church Looks at Its Task." John 4:35—"Raise your eyes and see the fields, for they are white for harvesting." (Goodspeed)

CHARLES R. HODGES, First Congregational, Hampton, Conn. "No Salvation by Genealogy!" Luke 3:8—"Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

M. L. BUTCHER, First Presbyterian, Marion, Kan. "Bread—in 1940." John 6:27—"Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life."

D. BRUCE YOUNG, First Lutheran, Shelby, Ohio. "Sin and Its Antitoxin." II Cor. 5:21—"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

CHARLES W. WOOD, First Presbyterian, Pueblo, Colo. "Why Life Is Sometimes Flat." Gen. 28:16—"Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not."

The Editor's Page

The Event of the Month

DWARFING all else, in newspapers, radio, common conversation and in our hearts, is the outburst of hell in western Europe. We hear nothing else, talk nothing else, read little else, and all our problems and anxieties are swallowed up in this fiercest attempt civilization has ever made to commit suicide. The wordy threatenings which Hitler unleashed during the past nine months prove now not to have been truculent boastings or bluff, but terrible truth. I cannot believe that even Hitler himself expected so swift a triumph through Holland, Belgium and the foot of the Maginot Line to the channel ports as he has actually achieved. Certainly the Allies could not have contemplated the possibility of such a hellishly magnificent military machine as that with which Hitler has confronted them. The Allied machine is surpassingly formidable, but not infernal enough to meet Hitler's. Perhaps they can "improve" it before London or Paris is bombed. At this writing there seems to be no likelihood that Hitler will give them time to do so. Yet I doubt that the full force of the Allies has been thrown into the battle. We know so little—only that the German front is moving steadily westward and southward. Of the vast slaughter of our fellow men, of the ruined cities, we know nothing. We seem to be watching a game. What is this thing called civilization which can be "saved" by so unspeakable an eruption from the pit? After the war is over —whichever side wins—where will you find civilization? And there are Americans who want to take this country in!

Greatest Battle In History

The Book of the Month

MEN OF POWER. *By Fred Eastman. Cokesbury Press. Five volumes (boxed), $6.95. Single volumes, $1.50.*

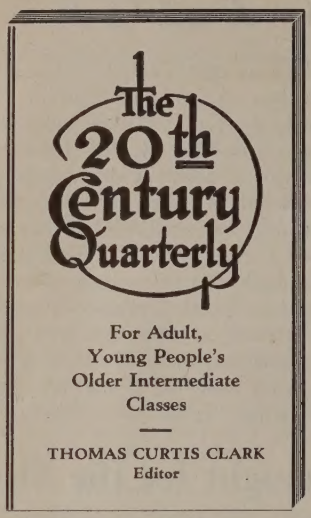
HERE is biography in a form and measure which every public speaker, be he very learned or not very learned, must at some time wish to have access to. Dr. Eastman writes to help the reader, not merely to display his erudition. He has lived imaginatively in the personal experiences of these twenty great men whose thoughts and deeds have influenced human history. From the wealth of material which he has mastered he has selected those aspects of these great men which have lasting significance, especially those qualities which are reproducible in our lives. They were all men of power, and the biographer is in quest of the secret of their power. He passes by all else as irrelevant to this practical purpose. If he can find their secret, he can make it available for others. How well he succeeds only those can know who have read these books. The final volume, the fifth, deals with Gandhi, Lenin, Trudeau and R. L. Stevenson. Other volumes, four biographies in each, include Thomas Jefferson, Dickens, Matthew Arnold and Pasteur; Francis of Assisi, Leonardo da Vinci, Milton and Oliver Cromwell; Benjamin Franklin, R. W. Emerson, George Fox and Darwin; Lincoln, Tolstoi, John Burroughs and the late Graham Taylor. Here are the great men from many widely scattered fields of human leadership. Each had a secret which Dr. Eastman has found and which he discloses with a style so lucid and unpretentious, and so quietly dramatic, that the spell of the great man rests upon you as you read. These books awaken a response something like that of young Tintoretto when, after watching a great artist at work, he turned away, saying, "I, too, am a painter!"

A Thought for the Month

THERE are four ways in which the church may be related to the state. (1) The church may be above the state, holding the state in subjection to its authority. This is the Roman Catholic theory. This relationship existed throughout the Middle Ages and was broken by the rise of powerful national states and by the Protestant Reformation. (2) The state may be above the church, demanding that the church shall serve the state's purposes, conform its teaching to the ideology of the state and sanctify the actions and authority of the state. This is totalitarianism, represented in fascist, nazist and communist societies. (3) The church may be organically united with the state, so that the state performs certain functions for the church and in return receives its loyal support in whatever enterprises the state undertakes. This is the theory of the established or state church. It exists in Germany, Holland, Scandinavia, England and Scotland. (4) The church and state may exist side by side, but separate, in a free society. This is the American way. Separation of church and state also obtains in Canada and other free dominions of the British empire. It is peculiarly congenial to democracy. In those democracies where an established church still exists the relationship is felt to be a survival one. Two things are requisite for this relationship: first, that the state shall not make any law respecting the establishment of any religion, or allow its official processes to be interlocked with the official processes of any church, or grant special privileges to any church or place any church under the ban of law or government administration. This is religious liberty. Second, that the churches shall exercise the spirit of tolerance toward one another, meeting one another in the forum of freedom with the will to understand, to exchange values, and to cooperate in all good works for the common welfare. This is the spirit of democracy.

Church and State

Charles Clayton Morrison



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